The Year Of Affordable Travel
by Robert H. Bestor

The year 2009 is already destined to be remembered for many things; a new president, bailouts, deficits, rising unemployment, foreclosures, and failing banks and businesses. We may also look back on ’09 as the best opportunity to visit Europe since the euro became Western Europe’s currency in 2002. The poor economic climate has reduced demand for travel and almost everything is on sale—and the year is just underway.

- As this is written in early April, the airlines have slashed fares to Europe to a level not seen in several years. Yesterday, United offered a $406 roundtrip fare, including taxes and fees, from San Francisco to Frankfurt for travel in the month of May. It wasn’t long ago that fuel surcharges on some transatlantic flights cost that much. You can fly in June for around $900, but if seats don’t fill up you can bet

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Nobody’s Business But The Turks
by Nancy Bestor

It’s early evening on the first day of our trip to Turkey. We’ve just arrived and are standing in front of Istanbul’s Blue Mosque. The crescent moon has made an appearance in the dwindling light and, as we admire the view, the Islamic call to prayer goes out over the loudspeaker, surrounding the area with its rhythmic chant. Much to the embarrassment of my family, I start to cry. There is something so incredibly beautiful about this moment, and although my family is trying to distance themselves from me, I feel so fortunate to be experiencing a culture so very different from my own.

During our three-week visit to Turkey, my husband Bob, daughters Emily and Sarah, and I heard the call to prayer five times a day. Prayer times change daily according to the position of the sun, and the call can be heard everywhere, even in your hotel room at 5:30 in the morning. The calls go out from minarets—the tall, skinny towers of a mosque—to let Muslims know it is time for prayer.

This is by no means the only cultural difference we experienced. It took me a few days to really notice, but soon I realized that women didn’t seem to be working in any jobs that tourists come into contact with. The housekeepers at our hotels were all men. The waiters in the restaurants where we ate were men. Ticket takers, gift store clerks, and sales people in the bazaars? Men. It makes you wonder where the women are hiding!

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These Little Town Blues, Are Melting Away.....

Time and again we hear airline travel horror stories. Flights are delayed and often canceled, planes sit on runways for hours, and it seems like every winter people are stranded for days in the Denver airport. Thus it’s always a pleasant surprise when things don’t just go as planned with airline travel, but in fact, airline travel exceeds your expectations.

That was the case on our recent spring break trip to New York City. We booked tickets with United Airlines about 10 months prior, because United had a great deal out of Medford, Oregon to JFK in New York—the round trip price, including taxes, was $300 each.

Our flight left Medford early in the morning, connecting in San Francisco, then on to JFK. When I walked by the gate desk in San Francisco, I heard one United employee tell another that the flight was overbooked by 20 seats, and they would be looking for volunteers to take a later plane. Bob quickly got in line to volunteer, and we signed up for a flight four hours later. Yes, we had to wait in the San Francisco airport for four additional hours, but in return, we each received $300 in credit for a future United flight, and United bumped us up to business class for the flight to JFK. The girls and I had only flown coach before, and although I’ve walked past the huge seats and brushed up against their fine leather

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There were of course women out on the streets, and easily more than half were wearing some kind of traditional covering, whether it was a scarf over their heads, or a full black burka with only their eyes visible. One gorgeous Saturday afternoon, while strolling along the Bosphorus in Istanbul, a city of 12 million, adult and child alike were in swimsuits jumping from the cement promenade into the water. The weather was hot and the water inviting, and it looked like great fun, but the adults and children enjoying themselves? Virtually all men and boys.

It was obvious too in our business transactions as well that the men we dealt with—whether they were waiters getting our check, or hotel employees checking us in or finalizing our bill—all wanted to deal with Bob, not me. They were not rude to me by any means, but it was clear that they were most comfortable dealing with “the head of the household” as it were. If they only knew who really wears the pants in our family, but that is another story.

The girls and I respected the local culture. We wore only long skirts or pants, never shorts or tank tops, and when we entered mosques, we covered our heads with scarves. In many cases, guards (men of course!) ensured that women did cover up. Bob would zip pant legs onto his convertible shorts as well.

These cultural differences didn’t bother me at all, in fact I found them fascinating. Another cultural event of interest was Ramadan. While we left Istanbul just days before the month long observance of Ramadan was to begin, preparations were abounding in the Old Town, with construction of temporary food booths lining the streets. For one month, Muslims refrain from eating and drinking during daylight, but at sunset, when they break the fast, it is often in celebratory fashion. It was quite interesting to hear our hotel manager detail how difficult it can be to abstain from eating, particularly when you’re working in a tourist establishment and are cooking and serving food all day long!

It’s hard to choose a favorite moment from our trip. We spent several days in Istanbul, a bustling city with outstanding sites. Highlights included a visit to the Grand Bazaar and the Spice Market, where one can easily get lost while bartering for carpets, clothing, spices, tea, and more (but be careful not to make eye contact with the salesmen, if you look longer than a few seconds, they’ll move right in, sure you want to buy their merchandise!). Also at the top of our list was the Hagia Sophia ($12 each), once Constantinople’s Great Church, then a mosque and now a museum, with 1000+ year old mosaics and frescoes (don’t run out of camera batteries here, or like us, you’ll have to rely on mental pictures), and the Underground Cistern ($6 each), a 27 million gallon capacity reservoir with Roman columns and even two Medusa heads partially submerged in the water (a great site when it’s hot out, none of us were in a hurry to exit). Finally, we couldn’t miss Topkapi Palace ($12 each, plus an addition $9 each for entrance to the Harem), home of the famous Topkapi Dagger and an 86 carat diamond, but the highlight here was the Harem, inside the palace complex, with beautiful tiles and windows and more (and our girls got a valuable lesson in polygamy!).

From Istanbul we took a night bus, an experience all on its own, to Cappadocia and its world famous fairy chimneys and cliffside cave dwellings and churches. We stayed at a cave hotel (yes, a hotel built into a cliff) in the central city of Goreme, a great spot for day trips throughout the region. The Goreme Open Air Museum ($9 each) is a spectacular World Heritage site and is not to be missed. Our self-guided tour took us through about ten ancient churches of varying size, carved into the rock. Many are incredibly well preserved with frescoes throughout, dating from between the 9th and 11th centuries. Another top excursion was a day long tour ($30 each for Bob and I, $15 each for the girls, with lunch) that included the Derinkuyu Underground City, a hike and tour of the Ihlara Valley and a visit to the Selime Monastery. The underground city of Derinkuyu has seven levels, the lowest of which is 180 feet beneath the surface. It is accessed through a variety of dark and narrow tunnels and stairways, and includes a large kitchen, church, wine room and more. Bob started out on the tour, but when the guide started talking about what to do if claustrophobia sets in, he quickly opted out. It was nerve wracking at times, particularly when I had to bend completely over at the waist to make it through a dark and tight tunnel, but if you can stand it (no pun intended), it is well worth the visit. Selime Monastery, like so many sites in Cappadocia, was a great hillside rock and cave formation on several levels, with collections of rooms covered in frescoes and often connected by tunnels that were great for exploring.

In Cappadocia Sarah started having stomach problems (see health story on page 3), and with no bathroom on the bus, our all night ride to Turkey’s “southern Riviera” caused us quite a bit of stress and anxiety, but we carried on and arrived unscathed in Antalya, where we picked up our rental car. From Antalya we drove along the beautiful southern coast of Turkey, stopping in seaside towns, including Cirali...
Getting Sick While Traveling Abroad

Since our girls were toddlers we’ve traveled in many foreign countries, and have been very fortunate to avoid any serious illnesses or injuries. Sure we’ve had sun allergies, colds and fevers, and have bought antibiotics over the counter in countries like Vietnam for as little as $2, but we’ve never had to deal with anything more severe. In fact, we went in to this trip to Turkey feeling pretty proud of ourselves for never having suffered from travelers’ diarrhea, even in Mexico, Costa Rica, Vietnam, and Thailand, where we always are local food. Well that all changed in Turkey. About a week into our trip Sarah, age 11, started suffering with stomach problems. As the days progressed, her troubles worsened until she couldn’t keep even 7-Up in her stomach. We got advice from many different folks, including a Swedish doctor staying at our hotel, and of course everyone told us something just a little different.

We ended up taking Sarah to a local clinic in the nearby town of Kemer, where she gave a stool sample (not hard for her to do at this point) and a doctor looked at her for all of 90 seconds. After this “thorough” exam, he read the results of her lab test and told us that she needed to have intravenous antibiotics. As you might guess, this made us fairly uncomfortable, especially considering the fact that Sarah is allergic to penicillin. We informed the doctor of her allergy, and he stated that penicillin was no longer used in Turkey. Well, we decided against the IV, so instead he disappointingly wrote us a prescription for antibiotics in pill form. When I looked at the prescription, I recognized the drug as one with penicillin in it. I told the doctor this. He matter-of-factly scratched out that antibiotic and wrote in another. That certainly filled us with confidence.

In the end, we didn’t give Sarah any drugs. I finally came to my senses and realized I could use my cell phone to call Sarah’s pediatrician back home. Sure, it cost me about $15, but the sound medical advice and peace of mind she gave me was priceless. When we were ready to end our conversation, I thanked Sarah’s doctor, and told her how good it was to speak to an American!

Sarah’s stomach settled down, although it was never 100% during the rest of the trip. We all suffered some gastro problems in Turkey, although no one was as bad as Sarah, and we all lost a few pounds in the few weeks we were there. We didn’t drink tap water, but tomatoes were a staple at every hotel’s free breakfast, and perhaps they were washed in tap water and that made our stomachs turn. Who knows?

What’s the lesson in all this? Next time I’ll be better prepared with medicine from home. In times past we’ve traveled with Pepto-Bismol and antibiotics for both girls. Somehow I dropped the ball on this trip. Needless to say, when we were getting ready to take an eight hour long night bus, and Sarah had fairly bad diarrhea, Bob was running around asking anyone who spoke English if by chance they had any Pepto-Bismol. We did get dried chick peas, which are supposed to stop up a bad stomach, and in the end, an English tourist gave us a supply of a stomach remedy that kept Sarah from smelling up the bus.

The next thing I’d do is make sure I had my doctor’s phone number, as well as the number for another local U.S. physician, in my cell phone or papers. It’s not hard to call the United States anymore, no matter where you are, and the cost will likely be worth it.

Turkish doctors are also not the only ones who might be dispensing questionable medical advice. Good friends with very sick children in Paris also suffered from poor advice from a doctor. I’d like to say the language barrier is the reason, but in our case, I’m not entirely sure that was true.

Another option is travelers’ medical insurance. A Travel Essentials’ customer told me about the nonprofit International Association for Medical Assistance to Travelers (www.iamat.org). Becoming a member of IAMAT, which is free, gives a traveler access to fixed rates for consultations charged by participating doctors and clinics, as well as a medical directory of IAMAT affiliated doctors and clinics in more than 90 countries and 350 cities. Participating doctors are fluent in English and will refer you to a specialist as needed and report to your own doctor if required. The directory also includes a listing for mental health practitioners.

Finally, common sense is always a good thing to have on hand when you’re sick and traveling abroad (it’s a good thing to have on hand when you’re not sick and traveling abroad too!). I’m a rule follower, and when someone in a position of authority—such as a doctor—tells me what I should do, I am prone to follow their orders meekly. But in the case of Sarah’s sickness, my gut told me to break from my rule-following habit, and not follow the doctor’s advice. I have to admit that I felt guilty at first, because the doctor and his nurses got a little huffy when we didn’t follow their orders. I’m certain their opinion was that we were snooty Americans who thought we knew better than experienced and educated doctors. So be it. If I have to choose between ugly and protecting my child, I’ll choose ugly American every time.

When we’re surfing the internet, dreaming and scheming about our next vacation, these are a few travel websites we check out:

- http://traveler.nationalgeographic.com/
- http://www.joesentme.com/
- http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/index.jspa
- http://www.tripadvisor.com/
- http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/
- http://www.travelafricanmag.com/
- http://www.travelesentials.com/ (of course!)

“Nature is, by and large, to be found out of doors, a location where, it cannot be argued, there are never enough comfortable chairs.” — FRAN LEIBOWITZ
Great Travel Products for your Next Adventure

As prime travel season approaches, we like to keep our eyes peeled for the latest products and ideas that make traveling easier and more comfortable. We’ve found a handful of excellent new and improved products that are getting rave reviews from our in-store customers and will definitely add some comfort and convenience to your summer travels.

Ballanza Luggage Scale
The Ballanza Digital Luggage Scale ($24.95) is a handy little tool for just about any traveler. Nowadays many airlines impose strict weight limits for both checked and carry-on baggage. Exceed those limits and you’ll have to pay fees or check your overweight carry-on bag. But, with the Ballanza Digital Luggage Scale, you can quickly and easily weigh your bags ahead of time, so you won’t have any surprises at the check-in counter. Simply attach it to any bag and lift the bag off the ground. The Ballanza quickly and automatically weighs it and saves the digital readout on its LCD screen so you can view it after setting the bag down. The scale easily fits in the palm of your hand and is small enough to take on your trip so you can weigh your bags for the journey home as well.

Cargo Duffel
Eagle Creek’s Cargo Duffels offer a big bang for your buck. These sturdy duffels are affordable, lightweight and as rugged and durable as you’ll find anywhere. They make great gear bags for any sport or activity and are an excellent choice for families on the go. Available in four sizes, the Cargo Duffels are easy to carry with padded hand straps, trunk handles and a detachable, padded shoulder strap that adjusts for your comfort. Hefty, lockable zippers on the main compartment ensure that your gear will stay put, and highly water-resistant fabrics help protect everything from the elements. The four sizes range in price from $65 to $95 and are covered by Eagle Creek’s amazing “No Matter What” lifetime warranty. And, each duffel comes in its own reusable stuff-pouch that can be used to hold shoes or other items inside the duffel while you travel.

Travel Pillows
The Travel Nook Inflatable Pillow ($19.95) offers a unique design that cradles your head between two large, comfortable inflated sections. Over-sized valves make the pillow easy to inflate. And its design allows you the option to flip it two different ways, offering support for different head sizes and travel conditions. The TravelRest Ultimate Travel Pillow ($24.95) offers another fresh and unique design. Shaped a bit like a large comma, the Ultimate Travel Pillow features a tether at the top of the pillow that attaches to headrests and seatbacks, giving you a pillow you can lean against while sitting up. The TravelRest Ultimate Travel Pillow quickly inflates and deflates and rolls up small when not in use. For added support, you can attach the bottom of the pillow to a seatbelt, when traveling by car or plane.

CentroSafe
PacSafe, the leader in anti-theft travel gear, now offers a clever and extremely theft-resistant line of business cases. The CentroSafe Laptop Briefcases offer classic lines and a professional appearance that conceals their unique abilities to protect your laptop and other valuable belongings. Like many business cases, the CentroSafe Laptop Briefcase ($160) offers a fully padded laptop compartment, a gusseted main compartment with an organizer panel and lots of dividers and pockets for organization of documents and electronics. But, what makes the CentroSafe unique is its anti-theft measures. First, its ingenious yet comfortable Snatch-Proof shoulder strap continues on page 5
Great Travel Products for your Next Adventure

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boasts a built-in padlock that can securely lock to a bed or chair. Additionally, tamper-proof, lockable zippers ensure security against pickpockets. The CentroSafe Slim Laptop Briefcase ($140) achieves a slimmer build by leaving out the gusseted file organizers, offering all the amenities of the larger case in a smaller package.

Everywhere Chair
The Everywhere Chair ($42.95) is by far our favorite portable chair. Not only is it “Britt-approved”, meaning it’s low enough to be used in the lawn seating area at our Britt Festival in beautiful Jacksonville, Oregon, but it’s comfortable and hillside-adjustable. You can adjust the Everywhere Chair to put you in a comfortable position even on the severely sloping terrain found in outdoor amphitheaters. And the same strap system used for adapting the chair to varied conditions also acts as a handy shoulder strap. The Everywhere Chair is very rugged and comes with a lifetime guarantee. It's perfect for camping, festivals, a day at the beach, or a day in your backyard. We highly recommend the Everywhere Chair to anyone who likes a comfortable place to sit down.

Packing Book and DVD
Anne McAlpin’s book, Pack it Up ($19.95), is a collection of travel tips and secrets from packing and travel-tips guru, Anne McAlpin. Her latest edition includes all the great secrets and ideas she’s collected over the years. Ideas like easy to follow packing tips, travel security and safety tips, money and time saving ideas, advice on cruises, and fun and easy tips on wardrobe selection for the modern traveler. Revamped for 2009, Pack it Up now includes tips and advice on how to travel “green”—minimizing your carbon footprint while seeing the world.

Along with the book, you’ll get a free 30-minute DVD, in which Anne herself covers her top ideas for packing, security and choosing an efficient travel wardrobe. Have your own private screening before you travel and you are sure to be prepared to hit the road.

Anne McAlpin is a world-renowned packing expert whose travels include countless cruises around the globe, and visits to 67 countries. She’s been featured on Oprah, CNN, and The View, sharing her packing advice with the world. Pack it Up is filled with interesting stories and anecdotes, and packing advice that will save you time, space and money on many a trip to come.

Compression TravelSox
In the wide world of compression and “support” socks, our favorites are the Italian-made brand, TravelSox ($29.95). Compression socks are traditionally used for poor circulation or problems with blood clots—their magic lies in their ability to put a graduated pressure on the ankle and lower leg. This means that when sitting or standing for long periods, your blood is gently forced to re-circulate throughout your body instead of pooling in your feet. These days, doctors recommend more and more that people on long flights wear compression socks just to avoid leg pain and swelling. TravelSox accomplish all of this with finesse—saving you from sore, swollen feet while looking like a stylish dress sock.

See Anne McAlpin pack a carry-on bag at Travel Essentials’ Free Packing Workshop, Tuesday, April 28 at 2pm and 6pm Call 482-7383 for details.

“Life is like a game of poker. If you don’t put any money in the pot, there won’t be any to take out.” — Jackie Mabley
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and Oludeniz. Having a car freed us up to drive to sites that were more off the beaten path. This included the eternal flame of Olympos, where the result of natural gas escaping from the earth is continuous flames, burning right out of the mountainside. It’s a great site to visit at dusk, when the temperature is theoretically a little cooler, and you can see the burning flames a little better. A short (but hot!) hike takes you directly up to the approximately 10 fires.

One of our favorite sites was Arykanda ($2 each). About one hour inland from Cirali, and nearly deserted of tourists, Arykanda features remnants of a stadium and some great mosaics. This, combined with the fact that we had the place to ourselves, made for a great site. Another less talked about but the price was right ($130 per night for our family of four).

Two favorite Istanbul restaurants were the Sultanahmet Koftecisi (Sultanahmet Meatballs), and Kanaat Lokantasi, both highly recommended by the Rick Steves Istanbul guide, which was our Bible in Istanbul. The meatball shop focused on lamb and beef meatballs, and Kanaat Lokantasi on fabulous bean soup. Both inexpensive and delicious.

The night buses each cost about $130 for the four of us. They make stops every 2-3 hours at a bathroom/cafeteria/mall and are about as comfortable as you would expect a night bus in Turkey to be.

In Cappadocia, we stayed at the Kismet Cave House (www.kismetcavehouse.com) in the Lilac Suite ($90 per night). A beautiful cave hotel.

Along the Turkish Riviera, our favorite hotel was the Hotel Canada in Cirali (www.canadahotel.net). The owners are Turkish and Canadian and have built a lovely hotel with excellent service, relaxing gardens and very good food in a rural setting. The hotel is biking distance (free bikes provided) to a nice beach and the Olympos ruins, and costs about $75 a night.

Near Ephesus we stayed in the town of Selcuk, at the great Hotel Akay (www.hotelakay.com) for about $75 a night. One night while here the hotel owner surprised us all with a birthday cake on Bob’s birthday. She saw his birth date on his passport, and figured the girls and I would not have planned a cake. Great people, great service, great hotel.

Our car rental was booked through www.gemut.com. We picked up the car in Antalya and dropped it back in Istanbul, 10 days later (at a cost of just over $600, $275 of that the drop charge in Istanbul). It was great to have a car and go where we wanted to at our own pace. Most roads, however, were two lane highways, and not always in top condition.

—This trip wasn’t the first time Nancy Bestor, co-owner of Travel Essentials, embarrassed her family, and I’m sure it won’t be the last.

“IT seems to me, once in your life, before you die, you ought to see a country where they don’t speak any English and they don’t even want to.” —THORNTON WILDER, OUR TOWN
These Little Town Blues, Are Melting Away...

and even seen the cool, little private
television, I was amazed by the difference
between business and economy.

What did we enjoy most? Maybe it
was when our flight attendant offered us
mixed cocktails for the grown-ups
and soda for the kids before we even took off.
Or maybe it was when he handed the girls
the dinner menu and Emily chose one of
the two appetizers and the flight attendant
said “No, you can have both.” Maybe
it was the white tablecloths that were
elegantly laid out before us, or the vanilla
sundaes with a choice of toppings, or even
the fact that we had to practically shout
when we wanted to talk to each other
across the expanse of the aisle. I think it’s
safe to say we enjoyed it all, and I’m not
sure if anyone was ready for our five-hour
flight to end!

While our New York experience was
not quite as high-class, it was definitely
every bit as exciting and quite a lot of
fun. We booked the Tudor Hotel at the
United Nations (www.tudorhotely.
com), on (www.hotwire.com) for $135
a night. It was a nice older hotel in a
great location for a great price. We saw
all the sights, including the view from
the top of the Empire State Building,
the Museum of Natural History (now
a must stop for families since the movie A
Night at the Museum), the Metropolitan
Museum, Central Park, a view of the
Statue of Liberty from the Staten Island
Ferry (free!), and more. We shopped
5th Avenue (window shopped that is)
and the worlds largest department store
(Macy’s), and walked through many great
neighborhoods, including Chinatown,
little Italy, and the Upper East and West
sides.

The highlights however, centered
around live theater. We saw a show
each of the five days we were there and
didn’t pay full price for a single one.
Thanks to an uncle, who is a member of
the Theater Development Fund (TDF),
and the TKTS half price ticket booth
in Times Square, we bought discounted
seats for at least 40% off, and in some
cases, for more than 60% off. We saw
good Broadway shows, including the
2008 Tony award winning best musical,
In the Heights, and Angola Lansbury in
Noel Coward’s Blithe Spirit, as well as
two great off Broadway shows, The
Marvelous Wonderettes, a 1950’s high school prom
musical (www.marvelouswonderettes.com),
and Fuerzabruta, a fantastic show that is
impossible to describe, you’ll just have to
visit the website (www.fuerzabruta.net) or
check our live video of “Fuerzabruta” on
you tube.

Our only star sighting was Charlie
Rose, not terribly exciting for the girls,
who were hoping to see Madonna running
through Central Park. It was a great six-
day trip to New York City, and although
we had to sit in Economy Class on the
return flight, we all came home happy.

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that number will come down as well.
• Lufthansa is offering big business-class
discounts for summer travel starting at
$2,036, not including taxes and fees. The
airline’s published business class fares are
around $10,000.
• Cruise companies are desperate to fill
cabins. There are two-for-one deals, free
airfare offers, and big discounts for those
willing pay in full several months in advance
of travel.
• For the first time in my memory, the
prices for some of Eurail’s most popular passes, the 21-country Global passes, and the
three, four, and five-country Select
passes, were lowered for the new year
instead of raised.
• Currently you can book Eurostar be
between London/Paris and London/Brussels
for $81 (go to www.gemut.com and click
“Rail passes & Tickets” under “Plan Your
Trip” in the right-hand column).
• Most people aren’t aware they can
book and pay for European rail trips on
the websites of European rail compa-
nies. Often you can print tickets on your
computer’s printer. Book well in advance,
travel at off-peak hours, and there are lots
of €29 and €39 fares for long distance
trains. Try the German rail website at
www.bahn.de and Switzerland’s at www.
rail.ch.
• Reflecting the stronger dollar, European
car rental prices are down since last fall.
In London, a four-door compact car rents
for as low as $153 per week including tax,
the same car in Paris is under $300, in
Germany $230, and in Rome about $380.
Ireland has weekly rates with tax starting
at about $110, but watch out for extras.
• Hotels throughout the world are cutting
prices. A friend recently booked a room
at Las Vegas’s Sahara for $22. They aren’t
quite that low in Europe but there are
still some amazing bargains, particularly if
• Most people aren’t aware they can
book and pay for European rail trips on
the websites of European rail compa-
nies. Often you can print tickets on your
computer’s printer. Book well in advance,
travel at off-peak hours, and there are lots
of €29 and €39 fares for long distance
trains. Try the German rail website at
www.bahn.de and Switzerland’s at www.
rail.ch.

The website www.biddingfortravel.com
reports these successful bids on Priceline
for travel in the next three months:
London: Marriott Hotel Maida Vale, Re-
gent’s Park $65, Hilton London Olympia,
$85. Paris: Marriott Rive Gauche $135, Le
Meridien Etoile $125, 3-star Novotel Vau-
girard $82. Hiltons and Sheratons near
Charles de Gaulle Airport, $85 to $100.
Venice: Holiday Inn Mestre, $65. Prague:
Marriott, $65. Budapest: Hilton Westend,

$65. Vienna: Le Meridien, $92. Berlin:
Marriott, $80. Zürich: Marriott, $96.
To obtain these low rates you must
biddingfortravel.com first to get an idea
of which hotels are accepting bids and at
what rates. The site also provides bidding
advice.

If booking a hotel “blind” is more
excitement than you can handle, you
might consider the online booking engine
at www.gemut.com (connected to Book-
ing.com’s database of more than 40,000
European hotels with photos, features,
location information, and user reviews/
ratings). There you’ll find many entries
that look like this: “Rate for three nights,
double room, €807. In this case, the hotel
is the five-star Sofitel Munich Bayerpost.
Less upscale hotels are discounting as well;
Munich’s three-star Hotel Galleria shows
a three-night double room price reduced
from €405 to €165.

Given the deals on airfares, car rent-
als, rail travel, and especially hotels, plus
a euro currently at about 1.32 dollars, the
outlook for affordable European travel is
indeed rosy.

—Robert H. Bestor is the father of Travel
Essentials’ owner Bob Bestor, and the
publisher of Gemütlichkeit (www.gemut.
com).
Get Ready to “Pack It Up” at Our Packing Workshop

Travel Essentials will offer two free packing workshops with America’s leading packing expert, Anne McAlpin. The workshops, Tuesday, April 28 at 2:00 and 6:00 p.m., will take place in Travel Essentials’ Ashland, Oregon store at 252 East Main Street. Anne will teach her inside secrets on packing a carry-on bag to save the cost of extra airline charges.

Anne McAlpin is a world traveler, packing expert & author of the popular book & video series, Pack It Up. She has been a regular guest on The View with Barbara Walters, sharing up-to-the-minute travel tips. She has also been a featured guest on Oprah, The Today Show, QVC, and Home & Garden TV’s Smart Solutions. Anne’s tips include packing smart for airport security, planning your travel wardrobe, safety secrets for women traveling solo, secrets to packing the perfect carry-on bag, and more.

Travel Essentials will also offer a 10% discount on all regularly priced merchandise, as well as other special discount offers, in the store on Tuesday, April 28 only.

Here’s a sneak peak of some of Anne’s tips for making traveling easier and more enjoyable, directly from her book, Pack It Up:

- Keep medicines together with prescription information, in case you’re not able to tell your traveling companion or doctor what medicines you currently take.
- Keep your medicines and jewelry in a bag that you can pull from your carry-on should you have to check your suitcase at the last minute for any reason.
- You want to make sure you know which bags are yours while going through security. Using bright neon luggage tags are the answer. Always use your business address on your luggage ID tag.
- Don’t forget the old trick of hanging wrinkled items in a steamy bathroom to refresh them.

For more on Anne’s book Pack it Up, see page 6, and to learn more about Anne McAlpin, go to www.packitup.com.

Anne’s packing workshops are always standing room only, so reservations are a must! To reserve your spot, call Travel Essentials at (541) 482-7383 today!